

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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P R 121519Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6131
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJECT: ELECTION PICTURE BECOMES MORE CLOUDY

1. ALTHOUGH IT HAS LONG BEEN THE CONSENSUS THAT THIS ELECTION IS MORE DIFFICULT THAN ANY OF ITS PREDECESSORS TO PREDICE (WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THE 1973 ELECTION), IN RECENT DAYS THE SITUATION HAS BECOME EVEN MURKIER. HOURNALISTS AND DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE LATELY BEEN BACKING AWAY FROM EARLY GUESSTIMATES ON THE NUMBER OF SEATS THE MAJOR PARTIES WILL WIN. THERE HAS EVEN BEEN A DISCERNIBLE RETREAT FROM THE CONVICTION THAT THE ALIGNMENT , NOT MATTER WHAT, WILL STILL EMERGE NUMBER ONE.

2. THE IMPRESSION OF CHANGE HAS ARISEN INDEPENDENTLY OF THE RESULTS OF RECENT POLLS, BUT THESE HAVE NOW GIVEN SUBSTANCETO THE FEELING THAT PEOPLE ARE CHANGING THEIR MINDS OR AT LEAST RECONSIDERING. MAARIV TODAY CITED THREE POLLS WHICH, IN
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COMBINATION, FIVE A CONFUSED PICTURE INDEED. IT QUOTES FROM ISRAEL-GALLUP POLL, COMMISSIONED BY THE DMC, THAT GIVES THE ALIGNMENT 38 SEATS; THE LIKUD 30 SEATS; AND THE DMC A SURPRISING 23 SEATS. THE OTHER 29 SEATS WERE DISTRIBUTED AMONG THE LESSER PARTIES IN NUMBERS WHICH MORE OR LESS AGREE WITH EARLIER POLLS.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, MAARIV ALSO PUBLISHED AN NRP-COMMISSIONED POLL WHICH PUT THE LIKUD IN FIRST PLACE WITH 33.2 PERCENT; GAVE THE ALIGNEMNT 31.5 PERCENT; DMC - 9.4 PERCENT; AND THE NRP - 7.7 PERCENT. THE DMC POLL WAS COMPLETED MAY 6 AND WAS CONFINED TO URBAN AREAS. THE NRP POLL WAS TAKEN BETWEEN APRIL 24 AND MAY 1 AND DID NOT INCLUDE AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENTS OR ARABS. NO OTHER DETAILS WERE GIVEN.

4. ONLY ONE FIGURE WAS RELEASED CONCERNING A PRIVATE ALIGNMENT POLL: THE ALIGNMENT'S LEAD OVER THE LIKUD HAD SHRUNK TO ONE PERCENT. THEI "FACT" WAS RELEASED LAST NIGHT BY MK YOSSI SARID, HEAD OF THE ALIGNEMNT'S INFORMATION BUREAU AND THE KINGPIN IN THE ALIGNMENT'S PUBLICITY EFFORTS. HE REFUSED TO REVEAL ANY OTHER FIGURE FROM THE POLL, MERELY STATING THAT IT WOULD BE "A CLOSE RACE." A MAARIV JOURNALIST TOLD US THAT HE SUSPECTS SARID IS IDSSEMINATING A FALSE FIGURE IN ORDER TO GALVANIZE COMPLACENT ALIGNEMNT SUPPORTERS. WHETHER OR NOT THE RACE IS ACTUALLY THAT CLOSE, WE HAVE NOTICED A FADING OF THE BOUYANCY THAT HERETOFORE CHARACTERIZED ALIGNMENT ACTIVISTS.

5. BECAUSE OF THE CONTRADICORY RESULTS, THE APPARENT RESTRICTED SAMPLES AND THE LACK OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INFORMATION ON THE POLL'S METHODOLOGIES, WE HESITATE TO READ TOO MUCH INTO THE RESULTS, NONE OF THE POLLS, FOR EXAMPLE, MENTIONED THE UNDECIDED VOTE WHICH OTHER POLLS SHOW AS A LARGE ELEMENT IN THEIR RESULTS. IT IS LIKELY THAT MOST OF THE UNDECIDED COME FROM AN ALIGNEMNT BACKGROUND AND THAT THEIR INDECISION IS BETWEEN THE ALIGNMENT AND ANOTHER PARTY OTHER THAN THE LIKUD (MOST PROBABLY BETWEEN THE ALIGNMENT AND THE DMC). TAKEN TOGETHER, THE RESULTS OF THE ABOVE THREE POLLS POINT TO TWO TRENDS: A CONFUSING PICTURE AND A WEAKENING IN THE ALIGNEMNT'S STRENGTH. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE ALIGNMENT'S APPARENT LOSS IS PRIMARILY TO THE LIKUD OR THE DMC. IN ANY CASE, THE LATTER TWO PARTIES ARE EXHIBITING NEW CONFIDENCE AS THE CAMPAIGN REACHED ITS CLIMAX. DUNNIGAN

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